

Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills, Executive Director for Communities

Report to:	Executive Councillor E Poll
Date:	02 April 2012
Subject:	Collections Access Policy
Decision Reference:	01975
Key decision?	Yes

Summary:

The Collections Policy and the Engagement and Access Policy both date to 2008 and are due for review by the end of March 2012. Following the Core Offer Review and the formation of the new Collections Access Team, within Libraries and Heritage, the two policies have been combined to form a single Collections Access Policy, which this report presents for adoption.

Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that the Collections Access Policy is adopted.

Alternatives Considered:

1. The Collections Access Policy is not adopted.

Reasons for Recommendation:

The Collections Access Policy sets out the principles of how the authority will care for and make available to the public its museum, library and archive collections in its care. These collections are of significant cultural and financial value and the policy is the foundation upon which a number of operational plans strategies and procedures are derived.

Combining the two existing policies makes operational sense and provides a more streamlined and efficient foundation for both strategic and operational delivery.

1. Background

- 1.1 The aim of the Collections Access Policy (Appendix A) is to set out a framework for the development and management of library, museum and archive collections owned by Lincolnshire County Council, and the access to them.
- 1.2 The Collections Access Policy replaces two previously adopted policies: the Collections Policy (approved by Executive Decision Number 1338, 12th December 2008) and the Engagement and Access Policy (approved by Executive Decision Number 1335, 3rd June 2008). The review date of both policies is 31st March 2012, and the formation in 2011 of the new Collections Access Team that encompasses both policy areas, has given the opportunity to combine policies and produce a single, over-arching replacement policy.
- 1.3 Lincolnshire County Council owns and is responsible for more than three million items in its collections, held across museums, libraries and archives. These collections are managed in various locations and increasingly in the digital realm and they are what make Libraries and Heritage unique. Together they attracted over ten million physical or virtual visits in 2011-12.
- 1.4 Some items within these collections are individually worth millions of pounds, others are of much lower financial value. Many are unique and of high cultural significance on a national or international scale (for example Tennyson collection, Bishops Rolls and Registers); others are of particularly local interest, but nonetheless cherished by users and visitors. The county's cultural collections are, without doubt, a major asset that requires careful management.
- 1.5 The county council is legally obliged to protect and provide significant elements of these collections but, more generally, their development and management is important because it ensures that the cultural heritage and life of the county and country are preserved for future generations; and that the present population can access this culture and heritage.
- 1.6 In developing this policy, evidence has been gathered from the following key drivers:
 - Fundamental Library Review (2007)
 - Sustainable Community Strategy for Lincolnshire (2008)
 - Fundamental Heritage Review (2009)
 - Cultural Strategy (2010)
 - Arts Council England (ACE) Achieving Great Art for Everyone (2010)
 - Arts Council England (ACE) Culture, Knowledge and Understanding: Great museums and Libraries for Everyone (2011)
 - LCC Business Plan, Vision and Purpose (2012, emerging)
- 1.7 Fair access to the collections, regardless of customers' individual circumstances is a central part of this policy. The impact of this new policy has been carefully considered in light of the new legislation and an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on the proposed Policy (see Appendix B).
- 1.8 At the core of this policy is the collections' 'Life-Cycle'. This model provides a basis for more focussed policies, strategies, operational procedures, action-planning and performance management.

- 1.9 At the heart of the cycle and the framework is a focus on access and improvement. The framework ensures that, throughout collections' development and management, access and improvement will be delivered in line with the County Council's vision and purpose.
- 1.10 The County Council is committed to making all collections accessible to all. However, restrictions to physical access to items are sometimes necessary. Key reasons why direct, facilitated access to material may not always be possible include, but are not limited to, issues relating to data protection (re. archives, in particular), preservation (all domains, but museums and archives in particular), availability of display and storage space (all domains) and resources – staffing or otherwise (all domains).
- 1.11 A wide variety of events, exhibitions, education and engagement activity is undertaken to enhance access to collections. An ongoing and continually changing array of open, active, detailed, interpreted and facilitated access to collections is delivered through the authority's library, museum, archive and heritage sites.

2. Conclusion

- 2.1 This policy aims to enable staff to develop and manage museum, library, archive and local studies collections, and access to them, in a holistic, ambitious and professional way; in line with the County Council's vision. The policy also aims to ensure that access to collections is inclusive and customer centred.

3. Legal Comments:

This is a high level policy which acknowledges the need to comply with the legislation that relates to libraries and museums. The Executive Councillor has the remit to adopt the draft policy provided he has the delegated authority of the Leader

4. Resource Comments:

Approval of this report will adopt a Collections Access policy, any expenditure associated with the implementation of this policy will be funded from the existing Libraries and Heritage Revenue Budget.

5. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

n/a

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes

c) Scrutiny Comments

n/a

d) Policy Proofing Actions Required

The policy proofing toolkit has been used to assess this policy. Minimal direct mitigation is required due to the fact that the sub-policies that cover the implementation of this policy (Acquisition and Disposal Policy 2010; Library Stock Policy 2011), and its impact upon people, each have a specific Equality Impact Assessment accompanying them.

6. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	DRAFT Collections Access Policy
Appendix B	Equality Impact Assessment of the DRAFT Collections Access Policy

7. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Collections Policy (2008)	http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/local-democracy/how-the-council-works/key-plans-and-strategies/heritage-libraries-and-community-grants-policies/54119.article
Engagement Access Policy (2008)	http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/local-democracy/how-the-council-works/key-plans-and-strategies/heritage-libraries-and-community-grants-policies/54119.article

This report was written by Jonathan Platt, Head of Libraries and Heritage, who can be contacted on jonathan.platt@lincolnshire.gov.uk.